

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DACCA 03227 240019Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 HA-05 IO-13 ISO-00 EUR-12 L-03 AGRE-00
AID-05 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00
INRE-00 /071 W

-----094255 240056Z /73/20

O R 220955Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9403
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3227

CINCPAC FOR POLAD; ROME FOR FODAG
DEPT PASS ALSUAID/ASIA AND AID/OFDA

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR PARA FIVE

E.O. 11652: ADS DECEMBER 31, 79
TAGS: PBOR PINT EAID BG BM
SUBJECT: ARAKANESE REFUGEE PROBLEM

SUMMARY: TREVOR PAGE, INTERIM COORDINATOR FOR ARAKANESE
MUSLIM RELIEF TOLD USAID TODAY FORMAL UNHCR REQUEST
FOR ASSISTANCE IS TO BE CIRCULATED END OF THIS WEEK. THE
FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISOR WILL BRIEF CHIEFS OF DIPLOMATIC
MISSION MAY 25 ON REQUIREMENTS FOR ASSISTANCE. FLOW OF
REFUGEES HAS DECLINED TO BETWEEN THREE THOUSAND TO FOUR
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THOUSAND PER DAY. THERE ARE SOME INDICATIONS SOME
ARAKANESE MUSLIMS HAVE MOVED FROM THE REFUGEE CAMPS ELSE-
WHERE IN BANLGADESH. THE BURMESE HAD RESPONDED IN A
MODERATE MANNER TO THE BANGLADESH NOTE AND INDICATED
THEY WOULD WELCOME A BANGLADESH MISSION TO DISCUSS THE
PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT ZIA IS INCLINED TO ACCEPT
THE INVITATION, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, SENSING PROBABLE

FAILURE, IS RELUCTANT TO MAKE THE TRIP. IMMEDIATE RELIEF REQUIREMENTS ARE FOR CASH FOR LOCAL PURCHASES OF CLOTHING, AND TRANSPORT COSTS, WHILE LONGER TERM NEEDS INVOLVE FOOD AND MEDICAL FACILITIES. END SUMMARY.

1. TREVOR PAGE, WORLD FOOD PROGRAM SENIOR ADVISOR, TOLD USAID DIRECTOR TONER MAY 22 THAT THE UNHCR APPEAL FOR ASSISTANCE WILL PROBABLY BE CIRCULATED AT THE END OF THIS WEEK. AT THE SAME TIME THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISOR FOR THE BDG WILL BRIEF CHIEFS OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS ON THE PRESENT SITUATION AND ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS MAY 25.

2. AS OF THIS FDATE, THE CAMP POPULATION IS 102,000. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT MORE THAN 150,000 ARAKANESE MUSLIMS HAVE CROSSED THE BORDER BUT SOME HAVE LEFT THE CAMPS AND GONE ELSEWHERE IN BANLGADESH. THE CURRENT RATE OF MOVEMENT HAS BEEN SLOWED TO THREE OR FOUR THOUSAND PER DAY. THERE HAVE BEEN 150 DEATHS THUS FAR IN THE CAMPS. DIARRHEAL DISEASES ARE PREVALENT AND BDG HEALTH OFFICIALS INDICATED CHOLERA ON MAY 16. FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN TOLD THE AMBASSADOR MAY 20 THAT THE BURMESE HAD RESPONDED TO THE BANGLADESH NOTE, INDICATING THAT THEY ALSO WISHED A PEACEFUL BORDER, THAT THEY WERE PREPARED TO TAKE BACK LEGAL RESIDENTS OF BURMA, AND THAT THEY WOULD WELCOME A BANGLADESH MISSION TO DISCUSS THE MATTER. HUSAIN SAID THAT AT A MEETING EARLIER THAT DAY PRESIDENT CONFIDENTIAL

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ZIA EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT SINCE THE BURMESE HAD INVITED A MISSION, BANGLADESH SHOULD SEND IT. HUSAIN, HOWEVER, DOUBTS THAT THE BURMESE WILL TAKE BACK MANY REFUGEES AND IS RELUCTANT TO GO, PARTICULARLY DURING THE BANGLADESH ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

3. FOR PLANNING PRUPOSES THE UN OFFICES ARE DOING THEIR INITIAL ANALYSIS BASED ON THE PERIOD THROUGH DECEMBER 30, 1978. THE BDG HAS REQUESTED WORLD FOOD PROGRAM FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR 200,000 PERSONS FOR 90 DAYS. APART FROM THE BULK SUPPLY OF THESE COMMODITIES, BANGLADESH RED CROSS WOULD UNDERTAKE SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING TO VULNERABLE GROUPS.

4. THE WFP IS CURRENTLY REVIEWING WITH THE RELIEF MINISTRY ESTIMATES OF FOOD, MEDICAL, CLOTHING, AND SHELTER REQUIREMENTS ON A MONTHLY BASIS. PAGE EXPECTS THIS LIST TO BE REFINED AND POSSIBLY AVAILABLE BY THE END OF THE WEEK. APART FROM FOOD REQUIREMENTS HE SEES A PROSPECTIVE NEED FOR A 50-BED MOBILE HOSPITAL, POSSIBLY CASH ASSISTANCE TO BE USED NOT ONLY FOR LOCAL PRUCHASES OF CLOTHING AND SHELTER BUT ALSO TO ASSIST IN THE CHARTERING OF A SMALL CARGO PLANE THAT COULD CARRY

SUPPLIES FROM COX'S BAZAAR TO TEKNAF WHICH WOULD FACILITATE DISTRIBUTION TO SOME OF THE MORE REMOTE CAMPS.

5. IN REPORTING ON MEETINGS WITH THE BDG PAGE INDICATED THERE IS CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY AS TO WHICH PARTICULAR MINISTRY WILL WIN OUT IN TERMS OF CONTROLLING THE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. THERE ARE MARKED DIFFERENCES OF VIEW BETWEEN THE RELIEF MINISTRY AND THE UNRESREP ON HOW THE OPERATIONS SHOULD BE RUN. PAGE BELIEVES IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO GIVE INTERNATIONAL PVO'S A MAJOR ROLE IN RUNNING CAMPS RATHER THAN DEPENDING ON BDG LOCAL OFFICIALS FOR OPERATIONS. THE RELIEF MINISTRY APPARENTLY IS OPPOSING TO EXPATRIATES PLAYING A ROLE OTHER THAN PROVIDING COMMODITIES.

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6. PAGE SEES THE US ROLE AS BEING MOST USEFUL IN TERMS OF WORKING THROUGH UNHCR OR OTHER DESIGNATED UN AGENCIES TO PROVIDE RELIEF ASSISTANCE. HE BELIEVES IT WILL NOT BE EASY FOR BILATERAL DONORS TO WORK IN THE AREA. WHILE WAITING FOR FURTHER BRIEFING FROM THE GOVERNMENT ON THE SITUATION, AND WHILE WAITING TO GET OUR OWN PEOPLE INTO THE AREA TO LOOK AT THE PROBLEM, WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT PAGE'S ASSESSMENT IS CORRECT AND THAT ASSISTANCE THROUGH A UN FUNNEL WOULD BEST SUIT THE NEEDS OF THE SITUATION AS WELL AS REDUCE THE REQUIREMENT FOR INTENSIVE US MONITORING. WE FORESEE A BDG REQUEST FOR PL 480 TITLE II ASSISTANCE INCLUDING FOODGRAIN, VEGETABLE OIL AND SOY FORTIFIED SORGHUM GRITS (SFSG). PAGE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THIS FLOW THROUGH THE WFP. WE WOULD WELCOME WASHINGTON VIEWS ON WHETHER THERE IS ANY REASON THIS IS NOT FEASIBLE. WE BELIEVE THAT THROUGH USE OF LOCAL MEDIA WE COULD GAIN POPULAR RECOGNITION OF US CONTRIBUTIONS WHETHER IT IS THROUGH A BILATERAL OR MULTILATERAL INSTRUMENT.
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Subject: ARAKANESE REFUGEE PROBLEM SUMMARY: TREVOR PAGE, INTERIM COORDINATOR FOR ARAKANESE MUSLIM RELIEF TOLD USAID TODAY FORMAL UNHCR REQUES
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, EAID, BG, BM
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